sible village elders. Few such breaches escape the attention of society, although in many of them no action may be called for by the caste or village elders. Display and ostentation are severely criticized in the community. Individuals inviting social censure for this fault are frequently nicknamed and mimicked. The behaviour of persons who have just come into wealth or a position of authority is subjected to a particularly critical scrutiny. Sexuality, in all its different aspects, provides another popular theme for gossip. Although bragging about unusual potency and sexual adventures is very common, in general the community watches and comments upon all abnormalities, particularly excessive indulgence and lack of adequate sex vigour. The comments of the group in this sphere too are merciless. Those who are on the higher rungs of the ladder of power hierarchy jealously watch their own position, and anyone casting a covetous eye on a position of influence at once becomes the target of the criticism of several pressure groups in the community. People attaining conspicuous success are invariably the subject of malicious criticism. Their actions and speech are closely watched, and later commented upon. Opportunities for taunting them are eagerly sought, and indirect references to their humble origin are frequently made. Finally, persons having too many novel and original ideas also invite the criticism of society. While people are unsparing in their comments, they are very much reserved in their praise.

Anger is freely expressed. Loud shouting, use of foul language, and occasional physical violence are the principal channels for the expression of aggressiveness. Sentiments of love and friendship too are publicly expressed; the only exception in this case being the suppression of all sentiments suggesting sexual intimacy.

Concepts of 'manliness' and 'defending the honour' play a significant part in governing inter-personal relations within the community. It is not manly to beat anyone who is too young, too aged, weak or infirm. On the contrary, a fight between equals is always considered fair; although it may necessitate action on the part of village elders. Notions of personal and family prestige differ in different castes, as well as at different income levels. Any challenge to personal prestige or family honour is bound to arouse a violent reaction.

Truth and straightforwardness are acclaimed as social ideals; but intelligent and ingenious ways of deception too receive

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admiration of their age-group. For the girls it is a rather difficult period, as they have to find a middle way between the dictates of their romantic impulses and the fear of the social censure that comes to all wayward girls. Adolescent boys divide their time more or less equally between 'learning to do things' with their parents and being with their playmates. Childish games in the dust are now replaced by more vigorous country sport. Within the age-group itself thoughts and efforts in the domain of sex come to occupy a very important place. Masturbation is now regarded as 'unmanly' and gradually given up. Lying with other boys is also looked down upon. Efforts are made to attract younger girls for first experimentation in heterosexual love. Far more than these actual experiments, fantasies occupy an important place in their thoughts and conversation. Imaginary affairs with a woman believed to be of easy virtue—or with a completely fictitious character from a distant village—are vividly and elaborately described. Growth of the pubic hair and genital organs is closely watched and compared. In this way they slowly reach their youth when talks for their marriage are opened. On marriage they acquire a new social status.

After marriage the young men and women have to give considerable attention to their economic pursuits and crafts, and as such they have relatively little time left for group activity. Yet, their leisure and time are generally spent in the company of persons belonging more or less to the same age-group, who constitute 'a set of friends'. Important activities of these groups include loafing, playing card games, gossip and conversation. They may even go to the city together; and always act in unison when planning mischief. Confidences are exchanged within these groups; and people often narrate to each other their recent exploits. One of the favourite themes is boasting regarding success in sexual adventures. Success—real or imaginary—with an adolescent girl is vividly described within this narrow circle. Graphic and vivid details are always added to make the account more colourful. 'It was her very first experience. Oh, there was so much blood. I did not know whether to pacify her or to concentrate on the act', one would say. This would start a chain in which all others would narrate their parallel experiences—many of which would be slightly modified editions of often-told tales. The *motif* of a girl being frightened by the largeness of a man's organ also

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572 keeps on repeating itself. Some young men introduce a note of
831 slight sadism when they talk of their 'forcing-in' acts against
521 unwilling partners. General comments about the goings on in the village are an important item in the activities of these groups. The latest scandals are discussed and spread to the rest of the community in one or other of these groups. Women are classified into sexual categories, such as 'the easy' type, 'invite you and later say "no"' type, 'the wrestler' type and 'the hollow'. Code words are employed to describe different persons. Peculiarities and weaknesses of men are also noted and commented upon. Domestic duties do not leave much leisure to young married women. Consequently they cannot plan any group activity. But they too can exchange views, and discuss the latest affairs and developments while they wait near the well for their turn to draw water or when they go out for washing the clothes and bathing.

575 Middle-aged people have their own groups. These are informal
521 conversational gatherings; but their membership and attendance is nearly fixed. Groups of men and women meet separately; although two or three women in the village are privileged and have access to some of the men's groups. The village has twelve to fourteen men's groups, out of which three are politically and socially influential and important. In practically each quarter of the village there are one or two groups of elderly women. While the membership of the men's groups remains fairly stationary, that of the women's groups changes very often, varying according to recent quarrels or patching up of past differences. Most of the men's groups are formed round some central, politically influential figure. Gossip and politics appear to be their most important functions. Day to day developments in the village are discussed, and often the line to be taken in the central village council is worked out here long before the council's session. All these groups consist of two kinds of members—'regulars', whose loyalty and affiliation are not in doubt; and 'occasionals', whose affiliations are shaky, but who turn up periodically out of curiosity or with a definite
[626] purpose. These groups play a significant part in managing the affairs of the village, for their comments circulating in the village by word of mouth set the pace and direction for further action by
575 the community in most matters. It should be added here that these groups comprise mostly the middle-aged people. While some ambitious young men seek to attend them, the aged generally